

Position of San Miguel Tiltepec on México Indígena

To the general public

To the news media

We, the citizens of the community of San Miguel Tiltepec, through our Municipal Authority and Commissioner of Communal Goods, would like to let you know our position regarding an investigative project called México Indígena, begun in 2006 and finished in July of 2008, which produced a map containing information regarding place names as well as other cultural and geographical information furnished by people in our community.

The investigative researchers and students (Derek Smith, John Kelly, Aída Ramos and others), headed by Peter Herlihy, who appeared before the General Assembly in our community, only told us that the aim of the research was to find out about the impacts of the PROCED program on indigenous communities. They never told us that the data they collected in our community would be turned over to the Foreign Military Studies Office (FMSO) of the United States Army, and neither did they inform us that that institution was one of the sources of financing for the project. For this reason, we believe that our General Assembly was deceived by the researchers, who intended to gather information for their own interests.

The community did not request the investigation; instead, the researchers convinced the community to approve it. Accordingly, the research did not arise from a felt need in the community. On the other hand, the investigators from the México Indígena project were the ones who designed the research method for gathering the kind of information that really interested them.

Information has been circulated in different news media and on the internet, alleging that our community agrees with the results of the investigation, when we were not even aware of what was going on. These statements were made by researchers from the México Indígena project (Peter Herlihy) and the president of the American Geographic Society, Jerome Dobson.

For the reasons stated above, we want to make our disagreement perfectly clear with regards to the investigation carried on in our community since we were never duly informed of the true aims of the project, the uses of the information furnished, or the sources of financing.

We demand that those responsible for the project México Indígena, the American Geographic Society, the Foreign Military Studies Office (FMSO) of the United States Army, the Autonomous University of San Luis Potosí, and the University of Kansas, as well as all other agencies whose participation has not come to our attention, comply with the following:

- Cease and desist from making any use whatsoever of the information collected in our community;
- Give us back the information that you took from our community;
- Immediately destroy all information about our community that you have in your possession and furnish us with the proof of destruction;

- Immediately eliminate all the information on the Internet that you published about the investigation carried on in our community; and
- Publicly apologize to us for having violated our rights as indigenous peoples and for having violated the very norms that appear in the Code of Ethics of the American Geographic Society that you profess to respect.

Lastly, we issue an alert to all the indigenous communities and peoples of Mexico and the world to not be caught unawares by the investigative researchers of the Bowman Expeditions, or by any other investigators who are only pursuing their own interests or those of the groups they represent; on the other hand, the communities and peoples ourselves should decide on anything that might be researched among us and who should do it.

San Miguel Tiltepec, Ixtlán de Juárez, Oax., March 17, 2009

RESPECTFULLY YOURS

Rogelio Hernández
Agente de policía municipal
San Miguel Tiltepec

Bernardino Montaña Mendoza
Presidente del Comisariado de Bienes Comunales
San Miguel Tiltepec

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